

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Zoll Foods Corp.

Chicago Manufacturing Center

SECOND LANGUAGE SPELLS SUCCESS AT ZOLL FOODS CORPORATION

Client Profile:

Zoll Foods Corporation, a division of ConAgra, Inc.'s Swift & Co., is a processor and marketer of custom-cut pork ribs and other pork products for the food service industry. The company, located in South Holland, Illinois, has 200 employees and average annual sales of \$100 million.

Situation:

Three years ago, ConAgra identified a need for English as a Second Language (ESL) courses at its South Holland production facility. With a large, ethnically diverse workforce, the company felt it needed to improve communications and its employee development program. ConAgra asked the Chicago Manufacturing Center (CMC), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for help.

Solution:

CMC referred ConAgra to its affiliate organization, South Suburban College's Business & Career Institute (BCI). After targeting ConAgra's goals and objectives, BCI helped the company obtain two state grants to help defray the cost of classes. Next, BCI set-up three types of classes: ESL training (the precursor to supervisory classes), supervisory training, and basic math. The ESL program is now in its third year. The classes have become so popular that there is a waiting list to attend. Increased confidence has improved communications in the facility between all employees.

ESL has also been successful in helping the facility promote from within. More than half of those employees taking ESL classes have advanced, four of them to leadership positions, one to a supervisory role, and one to quality control. Of the 15 employees who took basic math, 14 have been promoted, including six employees to leadership positions and one to a supervisory position.

Zoll Foods is pleased with the success of the program and continues to support it by holding classes during the work day on company time without disrupting the line and by making the sessions available to all shifts. The facility was recently awarded the business unit's quarterly performance award in recognition of its improvements.

Results:

- * Trained employees in English as a Second Language.
- * Improved internal communications.
- * Invested in workforce development initiative.

Testimonial:

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